

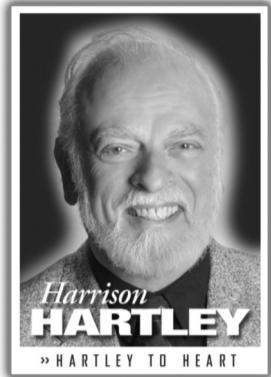
A Valentine Memory of Marilyn Maxwell

I'm lucky. I've never allowed differences in age, gender, politics, ethnic origins, social station, wealth, religion, or any other consideration to stand as an impediment to friendship. I don't claim any "halo" for this, just the good fortune of having sense enough to see it early (and when you come to such a beneficial realization early, the results stay with you).

I have to admit I don't much like stupid people, though by "stupid" I mean those who are willfully ignorant and proud of it. The number of tools in one's mental kit at birth is not under one's control, but to do the best with what you have is, and I don't like people who could think but don't.

I don't like mean people, either. Fairly early in life I introduced myself to Bertrand Russell and his general goal seemed to me entirely worthy: to lead a life of reason guided by compassion. How can anyone do better than that? And note that it works just as well if you flip the order, though neither piece alone is adequate. For full, effective humanity, they must work in tandem.

Which brings me to the point: I



liked Marilyn Maxwell. Despite a minor age difference (and believe me, for a man on speaking terms with trilobites and pterosaurs, nineteen years is nothing) we were good friends, and have been such for fifty years. Marilyn died last week at age 84 after valiantly battling pro-

gressive lung degeneration for some time, and I am only one of many who will miss her lovely, steady presence.

Marilyn was my high school Spanish teacher, though when we met I was very old (like Merlin, I "age" in reverse) and she was very young. She stayed young. (I don't know her secret, but I'm

working on it.) However, I should qualify this: youth can be a tad frenetic, and Marilyn Maxwell was a study of perfection in grace and graciousness; anything but frenetic. I'm sure she felt anger from time to time - we all do, and as she was compassionate she could hardly have escaped some vexation in this less than perfect world - but I cannot imagine her losing her composure. In this, as far I know, she was absolutely exemplary. She had a wonderful sense of humor and one of the most genuine and unaffectedly delightful laughs I've ever heard, but it is impossible for me to think

of her raising her voice in uncontrolled anger. Her natural disposition was calm and sunny, and though she maintained a remarkable personal dignity, she was never aloof, unfriendly, or pretentious. A considerable scholar and graduate of the University of Missouri at Columbia, Marilyn's interests were broad. She taught twenty-one years at Lafayette High School and twenty-one more at Central offering classes in Spanish (mostly), but also in English, and mathematics: an unusually varied selection of subjects in which to be certified to teach. And think of it: forty-two years! Anyone who has put in much time on the front lines of America's public schools knows that this argues a spine of steel behind that impeccably dressed, perfectly coifed, imminently tasteful exterior presence, and a degree of resilience second to none! I've been at it over forty years myself, but I could only manage twenty-five in high schools. It wore me out, but Marilyn remained unruffled.

Marilyn lived with her sister Barbara (a benefit of friendship is that your friend's sister becomes a friend) in the house her family built not long after they moved to Saint Joseph from Quincy, Illinois, in 1942. Not technically a native by the strictest standards, Marilyn nevertheless claimed Saint Joseph in the fullest sense of the word. She

served with my mother, Helen Loyd, on the Senior Center Foundation Board and with me on the Saint Joseph Landmark Commission. She and Barbara were main movers and shakers in the Lover's Lane Neighborhood Association, and one of her proudest accomplishments was the creation of the Lover's Lane historical marker on the parkway. Both have always been Robidoux Row supporters, and active members of Ashland Ave. Methodist Church.

Marilyn's passing will be felt in untold ways, not least of which will be her skill as a proofreader, and believe me, this is no insignificant tribute. I write fast, but fast writing isn't always structurally sound, and Marilyn and I used to work wonderfully on the Landmark commission because I could get something on the table quickly and she could make it immediately "respectable." We got a lot of good things done that way, and I don't doubt she would remark the idiosyncratic semi-colon in paragraph five above (if my original paragraphing holds in publication). I think on the whole, however, she would approve this Valentine's Day tribute, as I hope Barbara and the other family members do. She was a sweetheart, and she deserves it.

In Memoriam: Marilyn Eileen Maxwell, 1925-1910

The Fort Smith Purchase and Tourism

The city's purchase of Fort Smith, was approved by the City Council Monday night, but only after considerable debate.

St. Joseph, like the state of Missouri in 1861, was sharply divided between northern and southern sympathies when the Civil War broke out. St. Joseph's mayor, M. Jeff Thompson became a Confederate general, well-known as "the swamp fox."

The Union sent troops to St. Joseph after the war broke out, mostly to protect the railroad. While here, the troops constructed an earthen fort, equipped with probably twelve cannon.

They built the fort at what is now, 802 Prospect Avenue, which was the best vantage point overlooking St. Joseph, the railroad and the Missouri River.

Frank Flesher, director of the National Military Heritage Museum, said he could not find proof that a fort ever existed on Prospect Hill. He said his research showed that the 15th Illinois Regiment only spent five months in the city. He also questioned why anyone would want to visit a fort where there was never a battle fought.

One member of the audience produced a book that quoted a diary of one of the Union soldiers who referred to Fort Smith, named after it's commanding officer, Col. Smith.

A local re-enactor came forward in a Union uniform and showed an illustration of the fort from 1868 that was printed on the front page of the *St.*

Joseph News Press.

Bill Falkner proposed delaying the vote so council members could re-evaluate the information. Meanwhile, Council member Roger Baker said this Council has postponed too many votes, and called for the vote Monday night.

I asked Jeff Daum, who owns the property, if a two-week delay would influence his decision on selling the property to the city. He replied that he would take the deal off the table if the council postponed the vote. He said he had another buyer that would offer a higher price, and named him after he was pressed.

Mr. Daum explained that the city had promised him an answer no later than the summer of 2009, and that he felt he had waited long enough for the city.

A vote to postpone action failed on a four to five vote.

The Council voted 8-1 to buy the property for \$85,000, with \$70,400 coming from a cellular phone tax settlement and \$11,600 from the sale of park property.

Joe Houts of the Border War Society has led efforts to raise private donations to develop the site. Funds will be raised through the Friends of the Parks organization so contributions will be tax deductible.

Beside the initial \$85,000 purchase price, city staff estimated the annual cost of maintenance at about \$11,000,

which would mostly be for mowing.

I see it becoming another branch of our already exceptional historical attractions.

Past pitches have included promoting St. Joseph as the start of the Pony Express and the end of Jesse James. Certainly the Pony Express Stables and the Patee House headquarters for the Pony Express have been the base of our historical attractions, along with the Jesse James Home, where he lived when he was killed.

The restoration of Robidoux Row into a museum honors pioneer and founder Joseph Robidoux, There is the Doll Museum.

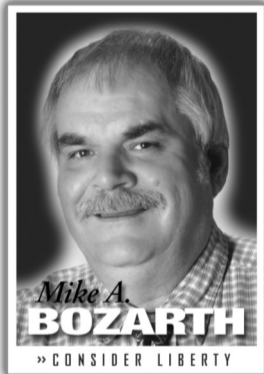
The St. Joseph Museums, with a large native American collection, the Black Archives Museum and the Psychiatric Museum house excellent exhibits.

The National Military Heritage Museum is one of the newer attractions.

We have our new Nature Center on the riverfront that has world-class exhibits.

A restored Civil War (or War of Northern Aggression, if you will) fort could only be a plus.

The Kansas City Chief's Training Camp is coming this year; we have a great minor-league baseball team with The St. Joe Mustangs at our newly renovated historic Phil Welch Stadium; our unique parkways; our



River Walk that stretches from River Front Park to Terrible's St. Joe Frontier Casino; a boat dock is being built close to the Casino and Nature Center; and we have become a leader in the life sciences field. We have a great university.

A Downtown Entertainment District with the beautiful Missouri Theater, the Civic Arena, free live entertainment at Coleman Hawkins Park in the summer. We have some great loft apartments, including a new development in the former WestTab/Meade Products Building.

The more things we have to offer our visitors, the longer they will stay and the more likely they will come back.

Tourism is solid economic development.

We have positioned St. Joseph well as far as attractions.

Now we need to look at increasing the Hotel/Motel Tax so we can capitalize on what we have-- to finance where we want to be.

As for myself, I dunno. Maybe I'll make souvenirs and open a shop downtown.

VERSE of the WEEK

After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove.

- LUKE 3: 21-22